

Mirror, Mirror



For many people, losing weight is about being able to dress the way they want or simply liking the way their bodies look. For others, it's about coming out of hiding and showing themselves to the world. In this chapter, you'll hear from men and women who spent years struggling with poor body esteem or feeling uncomfortable in their own skin—and who then took action to change those feelings by changing their habits. As they talk about how their weight struggles affected the way they felt about themselves, you'll realize just how universal body-image issues are. You'll also be inspired to tackle your own feelings about how you look.

Size Matters

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Kristy, 37, California, bookkeeper

All through high school, I wasn't really heavy—I was a size 12 or 14, what I think of as a normal size because I'm tall. I'm 5 feet 8 inches. In terms of weight, I was in the middle, between people who are really small and those who are very big—and I was pretty much okay with that.

Then I got married in my early twenties and I started gaining weight, about 40 pounds. It wasn't like I got married and decided to relax my eating habits, though I did start eating doughnuts a lot. My husband began to work out of town and wasn't home much. So I ate out a lot—and too much fast food. I went up to a size 16, which wasn't normal for me.

We got divorced a year and a half after we were married. I was so upset, and the weight just came off. I was back to my usual size 12 or 14. I was so devastated about the divorce that I couldn't even be happy about the weight loss. But about six months later, after I had adjusted to being a divorced mom, I was happy to be a normal size again.

Then, in August 2004, my dad died. He had cancer so it wasn't that he died suddenly. We knew it was coming. He and I weren't very close, and I guess I didn't think it would affect me as much as it did. But I put on 30 pounds in the months after he died. Even with the excess weight, I think I was in denial about how I looked. I still had this image of myself from before—that I was still pretty normal.

Then I got a very rude awakening. Gayle, one of my best friends, got married in Vegas in February 2005. It was a second wedding for her, and it was just me standing up for her. When the pictures came back, Gayle wanted to show them to me right away. I took a look, and my face must have registered anything but happiness for her because she asked me what the matter was. To tell you the truth, I was taken by surprise. Yes, I was happy for her, but I couldn't believe how bad I looked in the pictures. I was dressed up nice, with a cute dress, and my hair was

fixed, but I thought that it just didn't look like me. I looked so heavy!

Worse, I was standing next to one of the guys in the wedding party and I felt like I kind of eclipsed him because I was so big. And that's not normal; usually, the guy is bigger. I don't want to be bigger than guys. I'm already bigger than some because I am tall so I don't want to be heavier, too.

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That's when I knew I had to get serious about losing weight. One of the other mothers at my son's school had lost weight by going to Weight Watchers. So at the end of February 2005, I joined and weighed in at 193 pounds. I knew I had a lot of work to do.

I lost 43 pounds over the next five months by taking a hard look at my eating habits. I started eating a sensible breakfast and going home from the office for lunch so I could fix a turkey or chicken sandwich on wheat bread and

have some sugar-free strawberry Jell-O if my sweet tooth kicked up. I drank a ton of water, sometimes close to a gallon a day. I love to eat dinner out, but I stopped doing it as often. While trying to lose, I also began to exercise, mostly on the treadmill, and I discovered that I actually enjoy it.

At one point, I got down to 146 pounds, which was below my goal, but it was too much of a struggle to maintain. I felt as if I didn't get enough to eat when I tried to stay at that weight. I felt tired and hungry a lot of the time. And I just don't have that much willpower to be so good all the time.

Now, my weight ranges between 155 and 160—I am more comfortable there and it's still healthy. This now feels like a normal weight for me, and most of the time I feel pretty good about how I look. But sometimes I see thin girls who are wolfing down big burgers, and they look like they don't have a care in the world—and I have a little twinge of jealousy.

But I know that's not realistic or even normal for most people. And I've come to terms with the fact that I'm never going to be a size 4. My ancestors are Samoan and German so I'm a big-boned girl. The good thing is, at my current weight, I know I'm a lot healthier than I used to be.

Even after losing weight, I still focus a lot on the size issue, though now it's often in a good way. Recently, I bought a pair of size-8 pants, which means I'm three sizes skinnier than what I used to consider normal for me. It feels great. I guess what's normal is all relative.

TAKE-AWAY: Start your day with a sensible breakfast

Not only will eating a morning meal jump-start your energy for the day, but it can help you to avoid overeating at lunchtime and will keep your mood on a more even keel.

A Transforming Experience

Kimberla Lawson Roby, 42, Illinois, *New York Times* best-selling novelist

I decided to lose weight in May 2005 because I had just turned forty and realized it was high time I started taking better care of myself. I was beginning to feel tired all the time, even after a full night's rest. And I was truly tired of all the yo-yo dieting I'd been doing for years, to no avail. Every time I would try to lose weight on one fad diet after another, I'd always end up gaining every pound back and then some. I was riding a very vicious and frustrating cycle. I finally decided enough was enough.

In addition, my weight was affecting my career. The extra pounds made me feel as though I didn't look or feel as good as I could have. Whenever I would head out on national book tours or travel to individual speaking engagements, I was always concerned about what clothing I would wear and how it probably wasn't going to fit properly or look as presentable as I wanted it to. Because my eating habits were terrible, I couldn't resist ordering room service at hotels late at night;

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then I'd go to sleep on a full stomach, feeling miserable. But the worst thing of all was the fact that I was always exhausted on every trip I took. I just didn't feel as energized as I should have.

After I joined Weight Watchers, I attended meetings every single week without fail, no matter what I had scheduled for Thursday afternoons.

The meetings really helped me to keep up my motivation. I even attended one in New York while my husband and I were there, celebrating our fifteenth wedding anniversary.

While I was losing, my husband was one of my biggest cheerleaders. He supported my decision to join Weight Watchers from the very

first moment I mentioned it. And my best friends Kelli and Lori encouraged me daily. It also helped that I made my weight-loss efforts my top priority this time, and I rewarded myself for losing. Whenever I went down a size, I went shopping and treated myself to a new pair of jeans that actually fit.

My biggest challenge was cutting back on sweets because I do love them so! I still love chocolate and pizza, but now I indulge in sensible moderation. While losing weight, I stopped overeating and ate only enough to feel satisfied. Today, I eat a wide variety of foods—I love baked fish, particularly salmon and walleye, partly because it tastes so good and partly because it's very healthy—but the difference is that I consume much, much smaller portions than I did during my pre-Weight Watchers days.

The other major change is that I began working out on a regular basis. Now I walk thirty to forty minutes per day, either on a treadmill or on a bike path, and I tone with weights two to three times per week. These days, I love my arms—they are more toned than ever before.

I realized I'd reached a turning point with my weight the day I learned that I'd lost my first 10 pounds. I was so excited to be having great success—and I wasn't feeling hungry or discontented. It was then that I knew I could go all the way. And I did: I've now lost 40 pounds in total on my own and through Weight Watchers.

The best thing about being thinner is that I feel so much more energized and a lot more limber. I feel better today than I did in my late twenties or early thirties. While slimming down, I learned that it really is possible to look and feel a lot younger than you actually are. Every day, I remind myself that this is a wonderfully healthy lifestyle change, one that has transformed my life physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

TAKE-AWAY: Avoid eating a big meal late at night

Going to sleep with a full stomach can compromise the quality of your sleep and leave you feeling sluggish and uncomfortable the next morning.

My New Neck

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Sharon, 55, New Jersey, Weight Watchers training manager

I was a member of Weight Watchers for many years before I lost weight for good. I'd join and lose some weight and quit, then I would rejoin and lose again and quit, and so on. My gradual weight gain started in college, but I just ignored it, until it continued to get worse after I was married. I was on and off Weight Watchers for years before I finally made up my mind to really commit to it.

That was in 1979, and I rejoined because I knew I wanted to have a baby and I didn't want to gain weight on top of the extra weight I was already carrying. I made this a priority, and I decided I had to treat losing weight like a pregnancy, so I gave it nine months. I would not miss meetings because the minute I missed the meetings, I had a bad week. I'd think I was on a little break so I'd give in to whatever I'd been having a yen for and I'd end up overeating. Finally, I learned that coming to the meetings put a stop to the mess-ups. It took me ten months to lose 50 pounds, and I found out that I was pregnant the week I reached my goal. Shortly after that, I started working for Weight Watchers, and now I'm a training manager.

I'm very proud of the fact that I've maintained my weight loss for twenty-five years. I think a lot of people assume that once they've reached their goal weight they're cured and can go back to their regular lives. But I learned tricks to keep the weight off. For example, I used to have bad nails, but I started to polish them every evening to use that as a way not to eat at night. I like my new body, and it's the same idea—I want to continue to look good so I know I need to continue some of the healthy habits I've learned, like controlling portion sizes.

I felt so much better after I lost weight, but the part I never lost was my neck. I always had a double chin, and when I looked in the mirror, I still had the heavy face, the heavy neck. It was just kind of hanging there. I always said that if I ever had money, I would do something about it.

In 1997, a friend who had had cosmetic surgery offered to go with me for a consultation with a plastic surgeon. When computer imaging showed what I could look like, I said, “Oh my gosh . . . that looks great!” But I have four kids, and when I heard the price I said, “There’s no way.” I just couldn’t justify it.

About a year later I was left some money by my best friend, Janet, who died of breast cancer. Before she died, she said to me, “Now I don’t want you to use this on the kids or the house. This is for you.” I felt as if she had just shown me how short life was, so I decided to do it.

When I finally went for the surgery, it was just before my forty-seventh birthday. The surgeon suggested that I have my eyelids done, too. He lifted my lids, then he lifted my neck by cutting underneath and behind my ears and pulling up just the neck part. I felt a lot of discomfort the first two days after surgery, but I had thought it was going to be much more painful so I was pleasantly surprised.

Having the surgery has made me feel so much happier. I was always confident, but when I’d look at pictures of myself, I would feel disappointed because I would only see my sagging neck. I couldn’t really focus on the rest of me. I feel so good when I look at pictures now.

Everybody asks me whether it was worth it. I really think it was. It made me feel really good about myself, and that was important at that stage in my life. After taking care of kids all my life, it was my turn.

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TAKE-AWAY: Polish your nails in the evening

If you do something with your hands—such as giving yourself a manicure or doing needlepoint or knitting—you’ll make it impossible to snack after dinner; plus, you’ll distract yourself from the desire to do so.

On Campus and Still Losing

Caryn, 20, Pennsylvania, college student

I was overweight at a young age, but halfway through my freshman year of college, I hit my all-time high. At home, my mom cooked balanced meals, but at school, my options were mostly pizza, cheeseburgers, french fries, ice cream, chips, candy, anything deep-fried. My first semester, I ate anything I wanted and was having a lot of fun—until I took a step back and saw that I had gained 30 pounds in four months! It was just too much drinking and partying and living off the fatty foods at the campus dining halls. My weight hit almost 190 pounds. I am 5 feet 3 inches.

I wanted to wear hip clothes like my classmates, but low-rise jeans just don't look as great when your belly is hanging over the waistband. I felt uncomfortable in my own skin and was low on self-confidence. It got to the point where I would cry about how I looked, but because I have been overweight for most of my life, I just assumed that was who I was and nothing would change it.

One night, I was watching a marathon of *The Biggest Loser* on TV.

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Seeing those people who were way bigger than me change their lives and become the skinny person that I always wanted to be—well, it just hit me and I thought, “I can do that, too!” That's when I joined Weight Watchers. From that first meeting in February 2006, my battle with weight seemed so much easier. Hearing other people's stories and advice made me feel like everything I was going through was normal.

But I had a lot of challenges back at school. Eating at the dining halls, going out to dinner with friends who never had to diet, and living in a dorm room with no kitchen did not

make losing easy. But I had to make it work. Basically, my dorm room became my kitchen. For breakfast, I would buy fat-free yogurt, fruit, and high-fiber cereal and keep that in my room. For lunch, maybe I'd make a sandwich in my room. I ate most dinners in restaurants and learned a good lesson in how to be assertive with waiters: I'd often ask them to prepare something special for me. The way I see it, I'm paying for the food, and it is important that it be prepared in a healthy way.

Going out and drinking with my friends became another obstacle. Let's face it: I didn't want to hurt my social life, but I did want to lose weight. So at first I'd save up a few *POINTS*® for a drink. But after a while it seemed silly to waste empty calories on alcohol so I'd just sip on a diet soda. No one could even tell it had no alcohol in it, and it made me fit in more just to be holding a cup. To tell you the truth, I have so much fun watching other people get drunk and doing silly things.

So far, I've lost 60 pounds. Once I started losing weight, I began to look at my whole life and food differently. Now I eat to live, not live to eat. I still sometimes overeat, but there's no way I'm going to throw away what I've worked so hard for. Now, if I mess up, I just get rid of the junk food and start fresh.

TAKE-AWAY: Be assertive when dining out

Quiz your waiter about how a dish is prepared, and don't be shy about asking the chef to prepare something without sauces or extra fat. These days, many chefs are willing to do just that.

Wearing My Daughter's Clothes

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Dee, 55, Georgia, receptionist and Weight Watchers meeting leader

Even as a child I was always one of the bigger kids in the class, but I never really thought of myself as fat. I'd say I was *fluffy*—that was my word. Fluffy sounds a lot better than fat. But as an adult I gained about 5 pounds a year, and by the time I was in my late forties, I was getting pretty tired of being overweight. My knees were aching, and my back and my ankles, too. My husband and I went to my daughter's high school graduation in 2001, and when I looked around at the other mothers, I felt as if I looked like a grandmother. They were all wearing these cute, hip clothes, and I was wearing old lady stuff—matronly stuff—because of my weight. That made me mad. I thought, “I can't do anything about my age, but I can certainly do something about my size.”

One day my daughter was looking for something to wear because she was going out that night, and she was begging me to buy her something new. I told her she had plenty of lovely clothes, some brand-new with the tags still on. So I decided to go fishing through her closet and find her something to wear. She caught me in there and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “Look at all these beautiful clothes! I'd kill to be able to wear them.” She said, “Momma, you could if you'd lose about 100 pounds.”

Well, let me tell you, that was like a slap in the face, but it was the best slap I ever got. I thought, “I'm going to show her. I will lose 100 pounds.”

I weighed 242 pounds when I joined. That was in September 2001—the 13th, just two days after 9/11. The timing motivated me, too. I thought, “So many people didn't even make it to this day. I'm going to take better care of myself from now on.”

In one of the first meetings, the leader explained that obesity

could contribute to cancer. That was a total surprise to me. I had been treated for breast cancer the year before, and I thought, “*There’s* another reason to lose weight. I’m going to get this weight off because I don’t ever want to go through that again.” Breast cancer was scary, and I really didn’t want it to come back.

I also started to wonder whether my poor eating habits were part of the reason I got cancer. I was kind of like a junk-food junkie. I ate fast food, cookies, potato chips, candy bars, and if I ate a real meal, it was all fried foods and starch. But my favorite was cake, especially red velvet cake. It has this creamy frosting with nuts on it. It’s the greatest thing there is. If I got hold of a red velvet cake, I’d have cake for breakfast, cake for a snack, cake for lunch, and cake for dinner. I would even wake up in the middle of the night and swear that cake was calling my name and I’d go get a piece. I wasn’t in control of food; food was in control of me.

So getting started was a big adjustment. When they told me I should try to drink forty-eight ounces of water a day, I was like, “*Scuse* me? I don’t drink forty-eight ounces of water in a month!” I couldn’t do it initially. I had at best two glasses a day, but over time I worked my way up. And all those fruits and vegetables? Oh, brother. I had never really eaten them before. But I found that I liked cabbage and salad, and I kept pushing myself to try new things. Now I like just about any kind of vegetable, but it took me a good long while to get there.

I lost about a pound a week. I wasn’t willing to do anything super strict because I figured that would never work anyway. My daughter was a great support. If she knew I wanted some dessert or something, she’d say, “Momma, you can have it, but maybe we should split it.” The

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other thing that really helped me stick with the program—and helps me to this day—is loving how I look when I’m thinner. Early on, my meeting leader said it helps to have a goal, so I decided to try to lose 50 pounds by the time I turned fifty, which was about seven months away at that point. I was going to throw myself a birthday party and call it “Fine and Foxy at Fifty.” I didn’t quite make that goal—I was a few pounds shy—but I was still fine and foxy when I turned fifty.

About six months after starting Weight Watchers, I began to walk two miles every day. I had never exercised before, but I really enjoyed it. I found that it was a great way to relieve stress, and it made me feel healthier. I reached my goal of 164 in December 2002, and I’ve stayed a little below that ever since. I’m a size 10, so I can wear clothes that are fun and hip—even some of my daughter’s.

I recently attended her college graduation, and when I looked around at the other mothers, I didn’t feel like a grandmother anymore. I looked like a mother—and a hot one at that!

TAKE-AWAY: Push yourself to try at least one new fruit or vegetable per week

You’ll be treating yourself to a new taste sensation and a variety of nutrients—and you’ll be helping to expand your culinary repertoire in a healthy, low-calorie way.

Looking Suitable

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Fred, 65, Illinois, attorney

When I was a child, I had a book called the *Wonder Book of Knowledge*. In it was a story about Egypt, and there was a picture of King Farouk, the last monarch, standing in a swimsuit on a beach somewhere. He was a corpulent man, and the picture wasn't very flattering. I remember thinking, "Gee, I hope I never look like that." Well, one morning, I looked in the mirror and saw King Farouk. It bothered me immensely.

I had recently received a significant promotion at work—I was made the head of a governmental law department—and I didn't think the image I portrayed was appropriate for the office. In my new position, I had to appear before a board of nine elected commissioners and speak from a rostrum. One day it occurred to me that being as heavy as I was reflected a personal disregard. I felt slovenly, even though I was neatly dressed. That wasn't the image I wanted to portray. Also, most of my colleagues were thinner than I was, and I felt that being overweight signified a loss of control and a lack of confidence.

Since it was January, my wife and I were making our annual resolutions. Every year we resolved that we would lose weight and start exercising, and every year we did nothing. But after my King Farouk experience, we decided to join Weight Watchers. We did it as sort of a lark because nothing had ever worked for me. We went to the first meeting with another couple, and we cut up quite a bit. I think the leader was sort of upset with us because we weren't taking it seriously. But our attitude changed very quickly when I saw that it worked. I weighed 263 pounds when we started, and the weight started to come off right away.

I don't think I would have stuck with it if my wife hadn't done it with me. We both had to shift our habits significantly. She is an excellent cook, but she had a habit of cooking large portions. She had to learn to cook smaller quantities, and I needed to cut down on the

amount of food I ate. That part was difficult. As a child I was told, “Clean your plate, there are hungry children in China.” I followed that warning and cleaned my plate; then I’d fill it up and clean it again. That approach didn’t do me any favors.

I forced myself to stop taking seconds—and to stop snacking after dinner or at least to have better snacks. I love salty food, so for a long time my exclusive snack was a small bag of pretzel thins. I also bought a treadmill and started to walk 2.5 miles a night. As I got more fit, I picked up the pace and added some mileage. It’s just part of my regimen now. When we’re on vacation, we always look for hotels with exercise rooms.

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In January 2007, almost a year to the day from the time I started, I reached my goal of 190. My wife was still a ways from her goal, but she was very happy for me because she had been concerned about my weight.

Now my clothes fit well, and I wear flashier suits. In my heavier state, my clothing was always somber—I wore dark blue or black suits. Now I wear pastel or even red shirts and some jewelry, like a gold bracelet and a gold wristwatch. The colors and the style seem to suit my position better. My clothing and my slim physique convey confidence and authority—almost a little swag-

ger. Now when I’m standing at the rostrum, I’m dressing and looking the part—and I’m feeling it, too. I feel better about myself, and I think my employers have more confidence in me.

The last time my wife and I went shopping, I couldn’t find a suit that fit right because I needed a 48 jacket and 38 pants. We discovered these athletic-cut suits that looked very nice. The woman who was helping us said, “I generally sell these suits to younger men. No one over fifty buys them.” But they fit me perfectly. When I looked in the

mirror, I was very pleased with my image. King Farouk was nowhere in sight.

TAKE-AWAY: Quit the clean plate club

If you get out of the habit of finishing what's on your plate—and stop eating when you're pleasantly satisfied, instead—you'll spare yourself loads of unnecessary calories at every meal.

From Overweight Mom to Fit Triathlete

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Rina, 43, California, art teacher

I can still remember the ad I put in our community paper, word for word:

Forty-year-old mom seeks high school athlete to train her for an upcoming fall triathlon. Must be able to run, bike, and swim 5 hours a week. \$8.50 an hour.

The ad sounded like some fit suburban mom, just trying to save on a personal trainer. But I was forty, out of shape, and about 30 pounds overweight. I wasn't an athlete. I'd never even thought about entering a triathlon—until I got a holiday photo from my old friend Anne-Marie.

Like me, she was forty. Like me, she had two kids. But Anne-Marie had always been fit and never had a weight problem. In the photo, she still didn't have a weight problem: the picture was of Anne-Marie and her husband in workout clothes. The letter that came with the photo said they had taken up triathlons. She looked amazing—radiant, beautiful, happy.

Pretty much the opposite of me. I was fat, unhappy, dowdy, stressed out. I wasn't exercising. The year before, my husband and I and our two boys had moved from Texas to California. The move was a big stress; we had problems every which way. I gave up my job as an art teacher in Texas and started studying to get licensed in California. I didn't have friends here yet. It seems that whenever I sat down at the computer, which was often, I was also eating.

Looking at that photo of Anne-Marie jolted me out of my funk. I heard myself say, "If she can do it, I can do it." I went online and found a triathlon nearby later in the year. I registered for it. I felt really

pumped up and told everyone about it because I knew that if I went public, I couldn't let myself fail.

Pretty soon, the reality hit me: I needed to train for this event. It included a 500-meter swim, a 15-kilometer bike ride, and a 5-kilometer run. That's when I knew I had to hire a coach. Personal trainers are expensive, but high school kids always want to make money. So I put the ad in the paper, trying to find a high school athlete who could help me. A local kid on the lacrosse and football teams answered my ad. His name was Will. We started training on Mother's Day 2004, first focusing on the running (I barely jogged!). We ran a minute, walked a minute, ran a minute, walked a minute. By the tenth minute, I lay down in the dirt and nearly passed out.

Eventually, I got up. And we kept on training. I knew my weight was working against me, but it was a difficult time to try to lose. So my weight just kept going up and up. I went up to 147, too much for my small frame—I'm 5 feet ½ inch.

One day when I was on my computer, an ad popped up for Weight Watchers Online. I knew it would be easier for me to run if I was lighter so I signed up then and there. Being an online subscriber was perfect for me, since I had my two young children at home.

The first two months, I lost 8 pounds. The weight came off slowly, but the more I

lost, the easier my training became. I was jazzed. After five months, I hit my goal of losing 10 percent of my weight. By June 2005, I got down to my goal, 118. I never thought I'd ever be less than 120 pounds again.

But then again, I never thought I would be crossing the finish line of a triathlon. And that's what I did in October 2004. I was last in my age group, but who cares? The most exciting part of the race was seeing the finish line. When I saw the word "Finish," it was one of the happiest moments of my life.

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TAKE-AWAY: Say yes to a worthy challenge

Instead of automatically saying no to activities or events that sound difficult or time-consuming, accept the challenge of doing something that's healthy for you physically and emotionally; it'll be good for your weight as well as your state of mind.

Waving Good-bye to Excuses

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Christine, 40, Michigan, director of library services

My weight has gone up and down for pretty much my whole life. Everyone in my family is overweight so I just thought, “The metabolism gods are against me.” Even at my heaviest, I was probably 100 pounds less than anyone in my family. It really started in middle school—that’s when I got heavy. Then I was thin in high school, but I gained weight my freshman year in college. When I got married at twenty-four, I weighed 152—I’m almost 5 feet 8 inches—and I wore a size 8. But then I gained 5 or more pounds every year until I got pregnant with my daughter five years later. For a while, my weight stayed around 175 or 180, except for when I was pregnant with my two kids.

In the back of my mind, I thought that someday I’d lose weight, but I didn’t have a whole lot of time for myself. I was a walking zombie when my kids were young, and I wasn’t getting enough sleep. Plus, I had all kinds of excuses: I don’t have time to work out; I’m too busy; it’s my poor metabolism or the way my family is built. I told myself, “I have just a little weight to lose; it’s no big deal.”

But finally, those extra pounds really started to bother me. I had gained about 5 more pounds and my size 12s were just so, so tight on me. It was a really hot summer, and I was very uncomfortable. I’ve always been an exerciser, and I started walking seven days a week to try to lose weight, but I only lost 3 pounds in two months. In July, we went to visit a couple in Sweden whom we’d met on our honeymoon. When we’d first gotten acquainted, the woman and I were pretty much the same size; at one point, she’d gained weight and done Weight Watchers in Sweden, and she told me it was so easy.

While we were over there, we took pictures and I was pretty embarrassed because I’d gained enough weight that you could really see it in my face and my arms. But when we got home and I saw the side

view of myself in candid shots that were taken by someone else, it was quite shocking to realize how bad I really looked. I thought, “This is ridiculous!” Finally, I made a decision that I’d had enough of it. No more excuses! I started trying to lose weight within a week after returning from Europe.

I signed up for Weight Watchers Online. I work full time and then some—three people had my job a few years ago—and we have two kids, who are now eleven and nine. My husband is a teacher and a coach so we are busy every night. As it is, I have to get up at 5 a.m. to exercise so the online plan fit into my lifestyle.

It wasn’t until I started trying to lose weight that I realized where I

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“Now, rather than
having a side dish of
broccoli, I’ll put a huge
serving of broccoli on
my plate and half a
hamburger on the side.
That’s helped me to
feel full and cut down
on calories.”
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was going wrong—and I really wasn’t going that wrong. I just needed to learn a little bit more, mostly about portion control. Even though I was eating healthy foods, I needed to eat less of them and eat more fruits and vegetables. My husband is extremely thin—he is 6 feet 2 inches, weighs 180, and can pretty much eat whatever he wants to and I’ll gain the weight. So he eats huge portions and all kinds of desserts to try to keep his weight up—and I was eating those things, too. That had to change. Now, rather than

having a side dish of broccoli, I’ll put a huge serving of broccoli on my plate and half a hamburger on the side. That’s helped me to feel full and cut down on calories. At school, kids are constantly bringing around birthday treats so I used to have a cupcake and think it was just a little snack. After starting the plan, I realized it should be more like a once-a-week treat, not a daily one. Keeping a journal and being more cognizant of my eating habits really helped.

It took me two and a half months to reach my first goal, then I ended up resetting my goal two more times. Initially, I thought I just needed to lose about 20 pounds, and when I reached that, I thought I

looked horrible so I reset my goal to 150. Then, when I reached that, I thought I still looked heavy so I reset my goal to 135. When I got to 135, I still had a flabby stomach and I hated it, but I decided that I need to be realistic—I'm never going to look like Cindy Crawford—so now I pretty much stay at 133.

Losing weight has given me a lot more confidence in how I look, but I'm still the very same person inside. I don't mind people asking me how I lost weight if they're interested in losing weight, but I really don't like it when people, especially men, make comments to me about how I look. My neighbor came up to me at his daughter's graduation party and said, "Boy, you're hot!" right in front of his eighteen-year-old daughter and my husband. I've actually had quite a bit of that—and it makes me pretty uncomfortable. Other people have made comments to me like, "Boy, I'll bet your husband is just so happy that you've lost weight!"—and I was offended by that because my husband always loved me just the way I was. I never felt like I had to do it for him.

I'm glad that I lost weight, but I did it for me, not for anyone else. We have a swimming pool and people like to come over and go swimming; I used to feel very uncomfortable being in a bathing suit around them. Now I'm much more comfortable and confident in the way I look. That was important for my own self-esteem. Now I feel good about myself, inside and outside.

TAKE-AWAY: View sweet treats realistically

If you want to lose weight, you can't have high-calorie sweets—cakes, cookies, candy, or full-fat ice cream—when-ever you feel like it. You need to either find a lower-calorie substitute that you can have every day or save the rich desserts for once a week.

JOURNALING

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.